

SUMMARY: In the letter below dated 1 November 1582 written by Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604) to King Philip II of Spain, Mendoza confirms that he gave Oxford's first cousin, Lord Henry Howard (1540-1614) 500 crowns and the promise of a pension of 1000 crowns a year for spying for Spain. Mendoza refers to Howard in this and several other letters as his 'second confidant'. His 'first confidant' was Sir James Croft (c.1518-1590). According to *The Dictionary of National Biography*:

[Croft] openly supported a pro-Spanish policy, receiving a pension from Philip II whom he professed himself ready to serve in everything 'he honestly could' (HoP, Commons, 1558-1603, 1.674).

However as noted in this letter Croft had offered Mendoza nothing for eight months, having been terrified into silence by Leicester, and Mendoza's sole source of information was Lord Henry Howard, who, he said:

is extremely zealous and gives me twice a week the most confidential and minute account of all that happens.

Concerning the date of this letter, it should be noted that on 24 February 1582 a bull of Pope Gregory XIII ordered the use of a reformed calendar which cut ten days out of the year 1582, so that 15 October followed immediately upon 4 October (see *Handbook of Dates*, p.10). The change had just occurred when this letter of 1 November 1582 was written. However since Mendoza was writing from England, it is not clear whether he was using New Style or Old Style dating.

For the roles played by Charles Arundel and Lord Henry Howard in events involving Oxford in 1580/1 see TNA SP 15/27A/46, ff. 81-2 and other documents on this website, in particular the letters of the Spanish ambassador to England, Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604).

The translation below is taken from Hume, Martin, ed., *Calendar of Letters and State Papers relating to English Affairs*, Vol. II, 1568-1579, pp. 406-8.

I have received your Majesty's orders to communicate to the Prince of Parma the plots that are being hatched here against the Netherlands. I continue to do so with all possible minuteness, but I am unable to maintain these people in the humour your Majesty desires, as they are obdurate in their determination that I shall not have audience of the Queen, and I cannot request an audience after having received the reply which I conveyed to your Majesty on the 15th and 21st May, to the effect that until you had given her satisfaction about Ireland she could not receive me, out of consideration for her own honour, since I was your Majesty's minister. I have tried every possible means, overt and covert, to get into relations with the Queen's ministers, but they fly from me as if I were a rebel subject of hers, and things have reached such a point now that no one will speak to

me or even to my servants, as Don Juan de Idiaquez will have informed your Majesty. The only way, therefore, in which I can serve your Majesty here is to communicate the information I receive from my second confidant, as I have not heard a word from the first for the last eight months. I should have lost the second if I had not cast myself at his feet and begged him not to leave Court, and gave him 500 crowns, with a promise of 1,000 crowns a year pension, which he accepted, although he said that when I went away he could not well correspond with anyone else, and must relinquish the pension when he could do nothing for it. I can assure your Majesty that he is extremely zealous and gives me twice a week the most confidential and minute account of all that happens. He may therefore be dealt with in the manner I recommended, and your Majesty commanded, and I have intimated the same to him, but I gather that he accepted the offer chiefly in order that your Majesty should bear him in mind in view of what may occur in England rather than for immediate personal gain. The first confidant must again make himself useful for some years before your Majesty can be expected to make him another grant, since he is so very silent now. I understand that his reticence is caused by Leicester, who has quite terrified him.

I have written what your Majesty orders to the Queen of Scotland, and have received from her the letter I enclose. I write to her to say that I am sending to Madrid the letters she requests. The priest who went from Scotland to France is now in Paris. He is a prudent and sensible man, and sends to say that Hercules and the Queen of Scotland's ambassador blame Lennox for being so unprepared after the constant warnings they had given him of the need for vigilance.

The Duke of Lennox embarked for France by order of the King, but, whether in consequence of bad weather or by his own wish, he returned to Dumbarton, where he was joined by the principal people of the country. When the conspirators learnt this they again compelled the King to order him to leave the country. The King did so, but as he wrote in the letter that he still looked upon him as his good friend, the conspirators themselves and Robert Bowes the ambassador tell this Queen that they are not by any means sure whether he, Lennox, will go, and if she wishes the King still to be retained she must send money to pay 100 horse and 300 foot. She also hears from them that Lennox is bringing pressure to bear upon his friends in France, but that nothing will be decided there until she makes up her mind about her marriage. Robert (Bowes) tells her that the conspirators would not agree to the King's going to England, nor to what she requested about his person, which is thought to mean poisoning him.

The conspirators had arrested George Douglas, who contrived the escape of the Queen from prison, and at the request of this Queen they had tortured him, to extract from him the mission upon which he had been sent by the King to the King of France and the Duke of Guise, and the answer he brought back. Robert (Bowes) was also pressing for the prosecution and beheading of the Earl of Arran, but it was uncertain whether it would be done. They also report that on the 13th the King wished to ride into the country, and asked them to let him mount one of the horses which had been sent to him by the Duke of Guise. They refused him, whereupon he flew into a great rage, and said he would issue a proclamation saying that they were keeping him prisoner, and would call his people to

release him. When Lord Ruthven heard this he had a pony brought for him, and the King said he would reward him for it some day. I understand that when Walsingham related this to another Councillor, he said that matters there would soon come to an issue, either the conspirators would poison the King or he would escape and they would lose their heads.

Since the arrival of this intelligence the Queen has received advice from Foster, one of the Wardens of the Border, saying that the conspirators would have come to terms with D'Aubigny, but for the ministers who had prevented it. The French ambassador has received through France a letter from the King of Scotland for his mother, thanking her for the act of association, which he accepts, and looks upon himself as her lieutenant, bound to use his new powers the better to be able to release her, which he nays he will attempt even at the risk of his own life. He says he will give her no account of his present position in order to save her pain. It would seem from this and the ambassador's words that the King of France either has addressed or will address him as King.

It appears that the conspirators in Scotland are largely outnumbered by their opponents, and people who are best able to judge of the matter say that the reason no demonstration is made is to avoid giving this Queen an excuse for interfering by force in favour of the conspirators, which would turn the scale and make the conspirators the stronger party. They are also afraid of driving the conspirators to desperation, which might force them to kill the King and upset everything. Parliament there had been prorogued until the 1st January, as the conspirators had refused to summon it. Catholics here tell me that although they are assured by your Majesty's gracious message through me that your Majesty favoured their desire for an English Cardinal to be appointed, the Scotch revolution was bringing home to them strongly the inconvenience of there being no leader or head for them to look to here, and they therefore wished again to approach your Majesty through me, to beg that you would not lose sight of their petition, but would forward the selection of some such person as they desire, as it would be a great alleviation to the persecution with which they are afflicted. I see that not they alone, but even the Protestant adherents of the Queen of Scotland are much confused, as they cannot correspond with her, and her son is a prisoner. They are badly in want of a head to whom they could look, and with whom they might take counsel as to the best means of saving the life of the mother and son. They also beg me most earnestly to convey the same to the Pope. I have written to Count de Olivares about it. London, 1st November 1582.